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**Frequently Asked Questions Relative to Lead in Toy Jewelry**

**Q 1.** Why is the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) banning toy jewelry containing lead?

**A.** Toy jewelry has been tested and documented by the federal government and MDPH to have unacceptably high concentrations of lead. Children's completely natural behavior is to handle/mouth and inadvertently even swallow these objects, which can result in exposure to lead and associated health consequences.

**Q 2.** How serious is the health risk of children's exposure to leaded toy jewelry?

**A.** Health effects depend upon the nature and route of exposure to jewelry containing lead. If a child accidentally swallows a piece of leaded toy jewelry, the consequences could be fatal. Lead poisoning can have lifelong consequences on a child's cognitive development and affects virtually every organ system.

**Q 3.** What does the toy jewelry look like?

**A.** The jewelry comes in a variety of forms that includes necklaces, medallions, bracelets and rings. It may or may not be composed entirely of metal. Some items may appear to be painted or made of plastic. These items are generally inexpensive and they are displayed in a manner to appeal or be accessible to children. It is not possible to determine whether lead is in the jewelry by visual inspection.

**Q 4.** Which communities are currently designated as high risk?

**A.** The 14 high risk communities in Massachusetts are Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Fall River, Fitchburg, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Springfield, Taunton, Worcester.

**Q 5.** What are the Massachusetts Lead Law's purpose and basic requirements?

**A.** The Massachusetts Lead Law protects children from lead poisoning by requiring that residences built before 1978 in which a child under six years of age resides be inspected for

lead and abated if violations are found. Exposure to residential lead paint causes the overwhelming majority of cases of childhood lead poisoning in Massachusetts because of its prevalence in our older housing stock.

When residential property is sold, the Law requires disclosure of its lead status to prospective purchasers and guarantees their right to a lead inspection. The Law also requires that every tenant in Massachusetts be given the Tenant Lead Law Notification before entering into a rental agreement.

**Q 6.** How often are children in Massachusetts required to be screened for blood lead?

**A.** Under the mandatory lead screening program established by the Massachusetts Lead Law, all children are required to be screened at ages one, two, and three, and again at four if they live in one of 14 communities determined by the Department to be a high risk community for lead poisoning.

**Q 7.** What should I do with the jewelry that my child already has to determine if it contains lead?

**A.** Some private labs can test for lead content; however, the tests can be costly and will result in destruction of the jewelry piece. If a parent is concerned about a piece of jewelry they may simply want to discard the item.

**Q 8.** Should I be concerned about health effects if my child has or has had lead toy jewelry?

**A.** Consult your child's pediatrician or other health care provider to discuss exposure concerns and to determine if your child should be screened for lead. Screening involves analysis of a small sample of your child's blood to determine the presence of lead.

**Q 9.** How is Massachusetts going to enforce the ban on lead in toy jewelry?

**A.** Massachusetts authorities plan to conduct regular random spot checks throughout the state on a monthly basis focusing primarily, but not exclusively, on the 14 high risk communities to determine the presence of toy jewelry containing lead for sale in the Commonwealth. If found, the retailer/distributor/manufacture would be subject to penalties described in the statute. These may include monetary fines or imprisonment or both.

**Q10.** When will the proposed regulations go into effect?

**A.** State law requires that proposed regulatory amendments be presented at public hearings for MDPH to receive public comments. The public hearings are planned for late fall/early winter 2007. MDPH will review public comments and present the final regulations to the MDPH Public Health Council sometime in early 2008.

**Q11.** How can I learn more about childhood lead poisoning and the Massachusetts Lead Law?

- A.** The BEH's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP) website ([www.mass.gov/dph/clppp](http://www.mass.gov/dph/clppp).) has general information on lead poisoning, in addition to information on inspection and deleading services, community and statewide statistics on lead poisoning and legal documents for Property Transfer Notification and Tenant Lead Law Notification required by state and federal law. Documents can be downloaded or CLPPP can mail them to you upon request. CLPPP's public information number is (800) 532-9571.